

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 18111

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, XA, FR
SUBJECT: PCF DEMONSTRATION AND OTHER REACTIONS ON AFRICA

SUMMARY: THE PCF HAS BEEN THE ONLY PARTY TO MOBILIZE
ITS FORCES AGAINST THE GOF AFRICAN POLICY. THE RPR
GAVE SOME HINTS LAST WEEK THAT IT MIGHT WITHDRAW ITS
SUPPORT OF GOF POLICY BUT ITS INTERNAL DIVISIONS THWAR-
TED ANY CONCERTED, UNIFIED REACTION. THE PS HAS GOTTEN
BOGGED DOWN IN SUBSEQUENT EXPLANATIONS OF MITTERRAND'S
ORIGINAL SHARP CRITICISM OF THE GOF'S DISPATCH OF
TROOPS. ACROSS THE ENTIRE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, THE
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GOF'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON JUNE 2 THAT IT WOULD START WITH-
DRAWING ITS TROOPS ON JUNE 7 HAS UNDERCUT THESE PAR-
TIES' CRITICISM AND REDUCED THE CHANCES THAT THEIR PITCH
WILL SPREAD IN PUBLIC OPINION. THE OTHER MAJORITY (GIS-
CARDIAN) REACTION CAN BE SUMMED UP AS DISCREET SUPPORT.
THE ENTIRE SUBJECT SHOULD PRODUCE MORE SPARKS DURING
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE JUNE 8.

END SUMMARY.

1. PCF (NON)DEMONSTRATION: GEORGES MARCHAIS HAS SEVERAL GOOD REASONS TO ATTACK THE GOF ON AFRICA, BUT THE MAIN ONE MUST SURELY BE A SENSE OF CONVENIENT TIMING TO DISTRACT PUBLIC AND PARTY ATTENTION FROM INTERNAL PCF DIVISIONS. AFRICA WAS ONE OF HIS MAIN THEMES AT A HUGE YOUNG COMMUNIST RALLY ON JUNE 4. ACCORDING TO MARCHAIS, THE GOF HAS FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PREVIOUS POST-WAR GOVERNMENTS WHICH INVOLVED FRANCE IN OTHER COLONIAL OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM AND ALGERIA. TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENCE OF YOUNG COMMUNISTS WHO CAME TO PARIS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY FOR THE JUNE 4 AFFAIR, THE PCF CALLED A DEMONSTRATION IN PARIS JUNE 5 TO PROTEST THE GOF'S AFRICAN POLICY. BUT DESPITE THIS STAGE MANAGEMENT AND THE PRESENCE OF MUCH OF THE PCF LEADERSHIP (MARCHAIS, LAURENT, FITERMAN, KANAPA) IN THE FRONT RANKS OF THE MARCH, THE TURNOUT MUST HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTING FOR THE PC/ -- TENS OF THOUSANDS ESTIMATED BY THE PARTY, 5,000 AT MOST BY THE POLICE.

2. THE PCF HAS ALSO BEEN ABLE TO HOLD ITSELF OUT AS THE MOST DYNAMIC FORCE ON THE LEFT ON THIS ISSUE. THE SOCIALISTS, MORE SENSITIVE TO A PUBLIC OPINION OVERWHELMINGLY IN FAVOR OF THE FRENCH FORCES' HUMANITARIAN MISCONFIDENTIAL

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SION, HAVE LEFT THE FIELD MORE OPEN TO THE PCF ON THIS ISSUE THAN ON MOST OTHER FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC QUESTIONS DEBATED RECENTLY. MARCHAIS HAS LEAPED AT THIS OPENING TO ATTACK THE PS FOR ITS NOW PROVERBIAL "TURN TO THE RIGHT" AND FOR GIVING THE GOF MORE MANEUVERING ROOM BY ITS SILENCE. THE PCF IS THUS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH SEVERAL PURPOSES IN ITS PRESENT CAMPAIGN: TO RALLY ITS MEMBERS AROUND A LINE WHICH IS NOT DISPUTED WITHIN THE PARTY, RECALL ITS "GLORIOUS" PAST IN BEING ONE OF THE FEW TO CALL FOR EARLY WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM AND ALGERIA, IMPLICATE BY ASSOCIATION THE PRESENT GOF WITH NEO-COLONIALIST ALLUSIONS TO THIS PAST AND PLACE ITSELF IN A POSITION TO REAP CERTAIN BENEFITS, IF THE GOF'S POLICY IN AFRICA TURNS SOUR. THE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR THE JUNE 5 DEMONSTRATION WILL NOT DAMPEN PCF SPIRITS; IT HAS FOUND A NEW HORSE TO FLOG AND THAT BEATS TEARING ITSELF APART OVER ESOTERIC DEFINITIONS OF "DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM."

3. MITTERRAND ZIGZAGS: FRANCOIS MITTERRAND WAS FIRST OFF THE MARK IN CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT'S DESPATCH OF TROOPS TO SHABA (PARIS 16108 -- NOTAL). HE DECRIED

THE FACT THAT NO MILITARY AGREEMENT EXISTED BETWEEN FRANCE AND ZAIRE, THAT THE GOF DID NOT INFORM THE ASSEMBLY FIRST AND DEBATE THE ISSUE AND THAT THE GOF WAS NOT TELLING THE WHOLE STORY PUBLICLY OF ITS OPERATIONS. ONCE THE NEWS OF THE SHABA KILLINGS BECAME KNOWN AND

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 18111

THE FRENCH (GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED) MEDIA WERE FILLED WITH REPORTS BY SURVIVORS THAT THE FRENCH AND BELGIAN TROOPS SHOULD HAVE ARRIVED EARLIER, MITTERRAND MADE A RAPID, STRATEGIC RETREAT. THE PS NOW DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND THE WIDER GOF POLICY IN AFRICA, WHICH IT CHARACTERIZES AS ONE WHICH SUPPORTS CORRUPT, UNPOPULAR AND UNDEMOCRATIC REGIMES. THESE NUANCES MAY BE TOO SUBTLE FOR A PUBLIC

WHICH, WHILE GENERALLY CONCERNED OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF FRANCE OVEREXTENDING ITSELF IN NOW FOUR MAJOR OPERATIONS
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(LEBANON, CHAD AND MAURITANIA), IS MOST PREOCCUPIED WITH THE FATE OF ITS TROOPS AND ITS CITIZENS OVERSEAS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE PS HAS BEEN LESS VOCIFEROUS THAN ONE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED; BUT IT MAY ALSO JUST BE SAVING ITSELF FOR THE FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE ON JUNE 8 AND FOR THE REST OF THE ZAIRE STORY TO UNFOLD.

4. RPR BITTERSWEET: REMARKS BY BOTH FORMER PRIME MINISTER COUVE DE MURVILLE AND DEFENSE EXPERT ALEXANDRE SANGUINETTI HINTED THAT RPR SUPPORT FOR GOF POLICY WAS NOT A SURE THING. EVER SINCE THE MARCH ELECTIONS, THE RPR HAS NOT PASSED UP ONE CHANCE TO MARK ITS DISTANCE FROM GISCARD'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES. BUT THE CRITICISMS HERE WERE MORE SHARP, EVEN SARCASTIC. COUVE SAID ON JUNE 2 THAT THE PARIS MEETING OF JUNE 4-5 GAVE ONE THE IMPRESSION OF A NATO MEETING, PARALLELING A REGULAR THEME OF THE PCF THAT THE GOF IS SLOWLY AND SECRETLY REINTEGRATING FRANCE INTO NATO. COUVE CONTINUED THAT NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO SHOW YET THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOVIET OR CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE AND CALLED FOR THE FASTEST POSSIBLE RECALL OF FRENCH TROOPS FROM SHABA. SANGUINETTI STATED BOLDLY THAT "IT IS NOT THE USSR WHICH IS DESTABILIZING AFRICA; SHE IS ONLY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A SITUATION WHICH EXISTS." THESE EARLY HINTS OF RPR DISCONTENT HAVE NOT RECEIVED OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION BY RPR HEADQUARTERS -- NOR HAVE THEY BEEN CONTRADICTED. THE RPR IS NO DOUBT TORN BETWEEN DEFENDING A GAULLIAN POLICY IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA AND RESERVES ABOUT THE DANGERS OF OVER-EXTENDING FRANCE'S CAPABILITIES. IT IS CONCERNED THAT FRANCE NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN US-USSR RIVALRIES IN AFRICA, BUT IT MUST MEASURE THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT CAN EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZE ITS OWN DEPUTIES AGAINST THE PRESIDENT. AT
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THE PRESENT TIME, THE RPR IS WATCHFUL, NOT APPRECIABLY MORE CRITICAL THAN ON A WIDE RANGE OF OTHER ISSUES.

5. OTHER MAJORITY: REPUBLICAN, CENTRIST AND RADICAL PARTIES' REACTION HAS BEEN MOST NOTEWORTHY BY ITS ABSENCE. GRANTED THE ELYSEE, PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER ARE COUNTED ON TO CARRY THE MAIN BURDEN OF

DEFENDING GOF POLICY. THESE PARTIES HAVE SUPPORTED THE GOF LOYALLY, BUT DISCREETLY. THEY BREATHED AN AUDIBLE SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN THE ELYSEE ANNOUNCED LAST FRIDAY THAT FRENCH TROOPS WOULD BEGIN REPATRIATING JUNE 7. THE MAJORITY, AS MUCH AS THE GENERAL PUBLIC, WONDERED ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF TROOPS IN SHABA LONG AFTER THE HUMANITARIAN MISSION WAS COMPLETED. WAS THERE A DANGER THAT THE TROOPS WERE ASSUMING A NEW ROLE OF DEFENDING EUROPEAN INVESTMENTS IN KATANGA AND THEREFORE OF PACIFYING THE REGION SURROUNDING THESE INVESTMENTS? THE GOF'S ANNOUNCEMENT HAS RELIEVED FRENCHMEN WHOSE EYES WERE FIXED ON THE SHORT TERM AND UNDERCUT MUCH OF THE CRITICISM, WHILE LEAVING UNANSWERED THE LONGER-TERM CONCERN OF FRANCE'S GENERAL POLICY IN AFRICA. THIS LATTER ASPECT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO CHAD AND ZAIRE, WILL BE HOTLY DEBATED IN THE ASSEMBLY JUNE 8.
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